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ABSTRACT

Research in teacher education indicates the need for training university supervisors in specific programs that are compatible with the goals of the teacher education program. There is also evidence which indicates that student teachers often receive feedback from supervisors that is vague and implicit. As a result of the implicitness of the feedback, student teachers are often unable to follow through successfully in subsequent teaching. Some form of training is essential if student teachers are to receive information about their teaching that is explicit. The purpose of this study was to train four university supervisors to communicate information about student performances in an explicit manner and to hold them accountable for their performances during student teaching. As a result of participation in the training program, university supervisors were able to increase the communication of fully explicit tasks and type of accountability statements. In addition, they were able to decrease the communication of implicit tasks and different types of accountability statements during conferences in student teaching. (Author/JD)

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Improving the explicitness of verbal communications of university supervisors in student teaching.

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Running Head: University supervisor training

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Introduction

Research indicates that, university supervisors invariably have no specific preparation for the job of supervising students during student teaching (Hanke, 1967; Jones, 1980; Copeland and Atkinson, 1979b, Junell, 1969). Consequently, student teachers often receive implicit and vague instructions from their supervisors about teaching performances during student teaching experiences (Hawkins et al., 1985). As a result of the implicitness of the instructions, student teachers are unable to follow through sucessfully during subsequent teaching.

There is a strong evidence in the research which indicates that student teaching is the most important component in all teacher education programs (Connant, 1963; Locke, 1979; Zeichner, 1980; Tabachnick et al., 1978). If student teaching has such an important recognition, then it must provide opportunities to support the professional growth of the student teachers (Taggart and Wilkinson, 1985). Student teachers should receive explicit instructions about their performances in order to acquire the skills that are needed to cope with the professional responsibilities when they become teachers.

One way to improve the communications in student teaching is by providing training programs for supervisors. Not as has been done in the past in a haphazard, disjointed way (Taggart and

Wilkinson, 1985), but in a systematic, research-based effort. These training programs should emphasize specific skills that can enhance the ability of the supervisor to communicate explicit instructions about student performance during student teaching (Yates, 1981; Lang, 1980; Cornish, 1979; Horton and Harvey, 1979; Taggart and Wilkinson 1985). This study attempted to train university supervisors so that they can provide informations about the performances of student teachers in an explicit manner and to be able to hold them accountable for their performances during student teaching.

Method

Subjects

The subjects for the study included four university supervisors. All four university supervisors were graduate teaching associates pursuing doctoral studies in physical education-teacher education. All the university supervisors were contacted prior to the assignment of student teachers by the coordinator for student teaching. They all agreed to particpate in the study. Two hours of graduate credit was earned by each university supervisor for participation.

University supervisor training program

A major goal of the training program was to provide university supervisors with both a theoretical and practical understanding of the goals of the teacher education program. Also, another

goal of the training program was to provide university supervisors with the necessary skills so that they can communicate tasks in explicit manner and to hold student teachers accountable for their performances during student teaching

The training module emphasized three performance objectives: Monitoring, Conferencing and Follow-up monitoring. The first performance objective, monitoring, focused on the techniques and procedures for observing and recording data in various teaching situations.

The second performance objective, conferencing, emphasized the performance of four sub-skills during conferences. The sub-skills included:

1) Prioritizing the focus of the interactions during conferences.
2) Discussing and specifying tasks in fully explicit manner during conferences.
3) Discussing performances and determining how the student teacher's performance relates to pre-specified goals (holding the student teacher accountable).
4) Planning an Effective Supervision Guide (ESG-PE).

The first sub-skill, prioritizing the focus of the interactions, emphasized strategies for spending large percent of the conference time in: i) planning incidents which involved

discussions and suggestions of teaching strategies that can help the student teacher to remediate or maintain specific teacher or pupil behaviors, and ii) discussing micro-incidents which relate to specific teacher or pupil behaviors. In addition, the first sub-skill emphasized strategies for maintaining the time spent in discussing macro-incidents which relate to the context of the lesson itself, activities or drills, and incidents that are unrelated to the observation data at a minimum level.

The second sub-skill, specifying tasks, emphasized skills in how to decrease the frequency of implicit task statements and how to increase fully explicit task statements. A task statement was considered fully explicit when it entailed a description of the situation, performance and criteria. For example, "reduce management time to 10 percent during the next observation session". The performance was to "reduce management time", the criterion was "to 10 percent", and the situation was "during the next observation session". Also, a task statement was considered implicit when only performance description was provided. For example, "you have to reduce management time". The performance was to "reduce management time". No criterion for successful accomplishment of the task was provided.

The third sub-skill, communicating accountability statements, emphasized skills in how to decrease the frequency of type 1 accountability statements and how to increase type 3

accountability statements. An accountability statement was considered a type 3 when it entailed an application of consequence, account keeping and comparison with specification. For example, " your management time decreased from ten percent to five percent of the teaching time, that's a terrific job". The consequence was "that's a terrific job" (verbal praise), and the comparison was made as "your management time decreased from ten percent to five percent". Also, an accountability statement was considered a type 1 when only account keeping was communucated. For example, "how do you feel about your management time?" Only account keeping in the form of verbal questioning was provided.

The fourth sub-skill, planning the ESG-PE, involved the organization of the information generated during conferences in a meaningful manner. An example of a specification on the ESG-PE is shown in Table 1. The process of organizing the information generated during conferences include:

INSERT Table 1

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1) Selecting teacher or pupil behaviors that need to be remediated or maintained based on baseline data.
2) Specifying strategies that can facilitate remediation or maintenance of targeted teacher or pupil behaviors.

Table 1.

An Example of Effective Supervision Guide in Physical Education for Supervisors of Student Teachers.

SUPERVISOR: Tetteh-Ahumah SCHOOL: Accra High Sch. CLASS: 9th grd.

STUDENT TEACHER: Kofi Mensah

BEHAVIOR TO REMEDIATE OR MAINTAIN	STRATEGIES FOR REMEDIATION OR MAINTENANCE	EVALUATION CRITERIA	START DATE	END DATE	COMMENTS
Low rate of activity time	ST.Will: 1. Modify activities to provide opportunity for pupils to engage with content most of the teaching time. 2. Increase # of teams and use the entire space available. 3. Supervise pupils more actively. 4. Show enthusiasm- smile and participate with pupils. 5. Support on-task behavior of pupils. SUP. Will: 1. Monitor teaching. 2. Compare target behavior with specified criteria. 3. Provide feedback in conference. 4. Specify strategies together with student. 5. Apply consequences.	Maintain a weekly average of 40-50% of activity time for 4 consecutive weeks.	10/5	11/6	Immediate improvement over baseline, but occassionally low activity time then stabilizes above the target level. The objective was actually achieved on the 27th of November.

KEY
ST. Student teacher
SUP. Supervisor

3) Establishing criteria for evaluation of performance for each targeted behavior.

4) Determining commencement (start) and completion (end) dates for the specified targeted behaviors.

The third performance objective, follow-up monitoring, emphasized the application of observation and data recording skills to generate data for making comparisons or for evaluating the student teacher's performance. Follow-up monitoring also invloved the application of observation and data recording skills to generate data that relate to pre-specified behaviors that needed remediation or maintenance.

The training program was self-instructional. All the learning units in the training module for the BMS-PE were organized in a systematic manner so that university supervisors could follow step-by-step. Feedback was immediate to ensure correct subsequent response. There was a strong emphasis on mastery. In addition, there were opportunities to review learning units until mastery was achieved. A 100% performance criterion was determined sufficient for all the components of the training module except monitoring. For the monitoring component, an 80% performance criterion was deemed sufficient. For all the components, if a university supervisors did not achieve the criterion level, the learning unit was repeated until criterion was met.

Data collection and Instrumentation

Data were collected by the university supervisors during a ten week student teaching experience. Each university supervisor observed teaching sessions of the student teacher and conducted a five to fifteen minute (maximum) post-teaching conference with the student teacher. Data were collected in each setting twice each week for the same class. The conferences were audiotaped by the university supervisors. The post-teaching conference audiotapes were transcribed. The transcripts were then analyzed for specific supervisory behaviors verbalized by university supervisors using the Observational System for Post-Teaching Conference Analysis-Physical Education (OSPTCA-PE) Ocansey (1986).

Based on explicit definitions of supervisory behaviors, this system identified and categorized verbal communications within the post-teaching conferences at three levels, namely: (1) Focus, (2) Explicitness, and (3) Accountability. For the first level of the system, the focus of any interaction within a conference was categorized as macro-incident category, micro-incident category, planning incident category or unrelated incident category.

For the second level, each task within a conference was classified by it's degree of explicitness as implicit task or fully explicit task. To determine the degree of explicitness of

a task, the number of components present in each task statement was considered. The components included situation, performance, and criteria.

For the third level, each statement of accountability was categorized as type 1 accountability statement, or type 3 accountability statement. To determine the type of accountability, the number of components of accountability present in the statement was considered. The components of accountability included account keeping, comparison with specification, and consequence application.

A duration recording timeline was used to categorize the time spent by both conference participants in each focus of the interaction in level one. The duration recording provided information about the percentage of time spent in each interaction category. Also, an event recording technique was used to categorize incidents in the second and third levels of the OSPTCA-PE. The event recording technique provided information about the frequency of occurrence of incidents in each separate category of task or accountability.

Discussion of reliability of the Observational System for Post-Teaching Conference Analysis (OSPTCA-PE)

The method for calculating reliability of data by category for event and duration recording in the OSPTCA-PE was the scored occurrence method (S-O) (Ocansey 1986). The scored occurrence method allowed for rigorous assessment by category within the OSPTCA-PE instrument. For each of the four subjects, two reliability checks were made in the baseline condition and two in the intervention condition. Two forms of reliability checks were conducted on data from audio cassette recordings and data from written transcripts.

Discussion of reliability of data from audio cassette

Prior to analysis of the experimental data, a reliability observer was trained in the use of the OSPTCA-PE until a prespecified criterion was reached. The interobserver agreement on unambiguous examples presented on the audio cassette tapes was above 80 percent at the end of the training. As indicated by Siedentop et al., (1982) an 80 percent interobserver agreement on observations is considered acceptable minimum level for interobserver agreement.

In order to ensure reliability of the experimental data the following procedures were employed:

1) Audio cassette tapes for reliability checks were selected randomly so that the researcher could not manipulate

consciously or unconciously which audio cassette tapes were used to check reliability.

2) Observer and researcher coded identical audio cassette tapes on testing occasions throughout the study.

3) Observer was kept naive of the research questions to ensure that the observer was not biased in coding.

4) Recalibration sessions were scheduled once a week to review definitions and exemplars. This ensured that the researcher and the observer did not drift from the original codes and definitions.

5) All the data were collected on audio cassette tapes so evidences of disagreements were reviewed to establish agreement.

Discussions of reliability of data from written transcripts

The second reliability check involved the coding of supervisory behaviors from written transcripts. The reliability discussion in this article reflects the reliability checks made by an independent observer based on the transcripts from the conferences. The observer made one reliability check each in baseline and intervention conditions. The same procedures in the first phase were followed to ensure reliability of the results. For the two reliability checks, the range of the mean agreement for explicitness categories was 90. 3% to 100%. Also, for the accountability categories, the range of the mean agreement was 95.5% to 100%.

Based upon the results of inter-recorder/observer agreement and accuracy of behavior discrimination, the observation system used in this study was considered to have been reliable. Given that 80 percent inter-observer agreement (Siedentop et al., 1982) is an acceptable level and the results demonstrate mean percentage figures above the acceptable level, it was assumed that the data reflected what actually happened during the post-teaching conferences.

Visual analysis of graphed data

The results for the explicitness of tasks and the specifications of accountability statements are presented in bar graphs and multiple baseline across subjects. The discussions are presented by category for the explicitness of tasks and types of accountability.

Explicitness of tasks

Implicit tasks: Data for implicit tasks are shown in Figures 1 and 2. Figure 1 indicates that the mean number of implicit tasks verbalized by each university supervisor decreased as a result of the training program.

INSERT FIGURE 1 & 2

A visual inspection of Figure 2 shows an immediate decrease in the number of implicit tasks in the intervention conditions. The

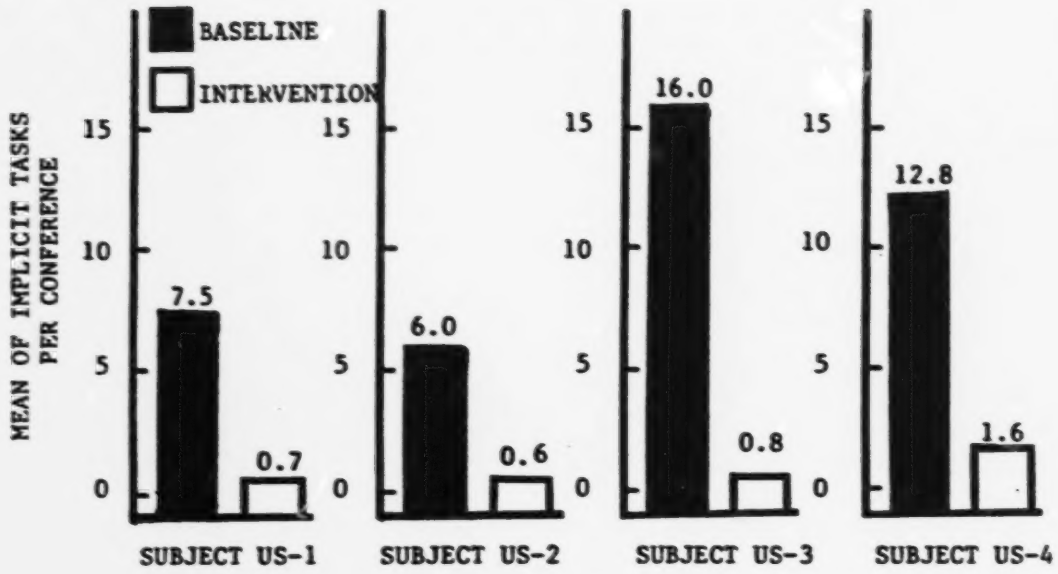

Figure 1: Frequencies of implicit tasks verbalized by university supervisors during conferences.

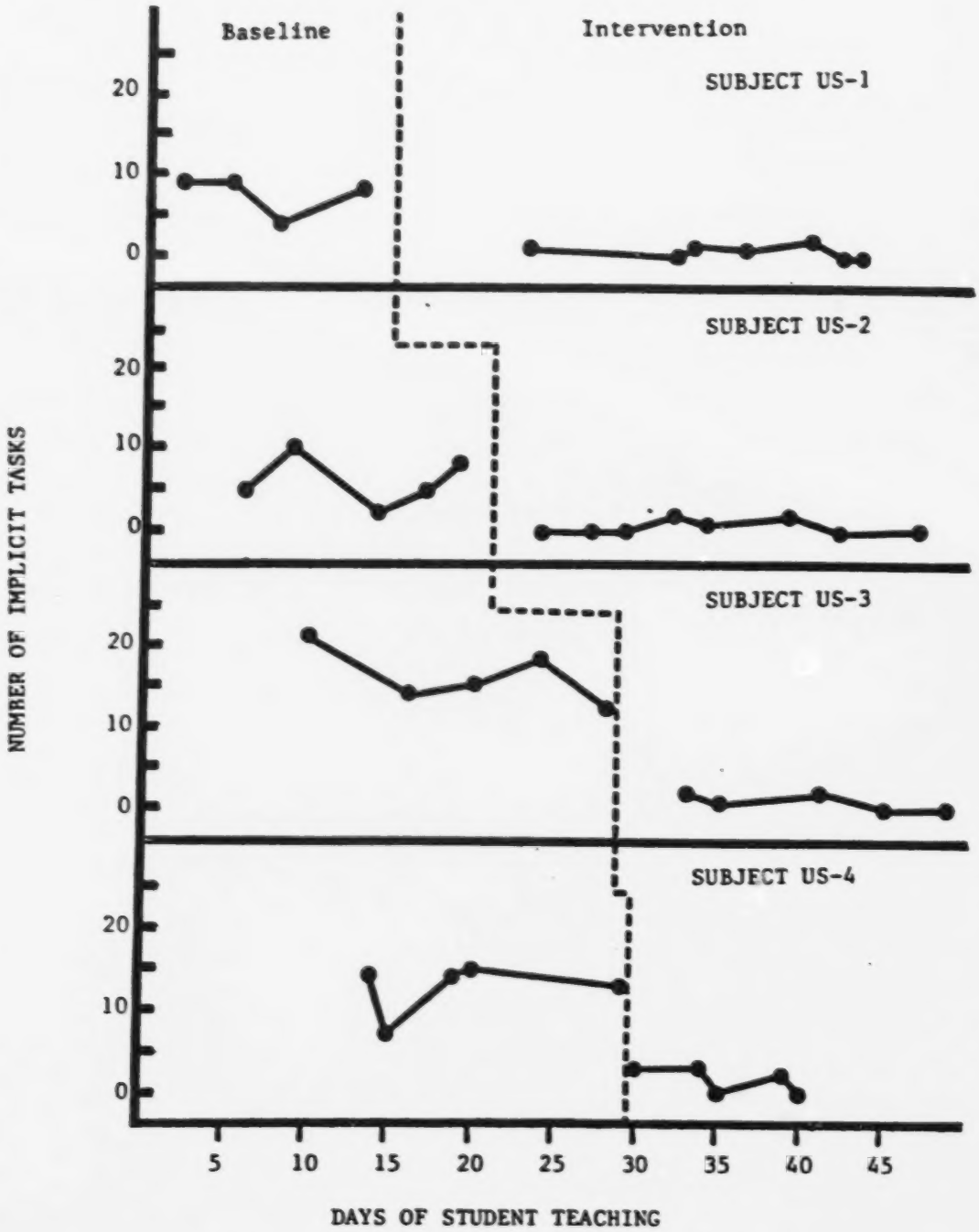

Figure 2: Frequency of implicit tasks verbalized by university supervisors (US.) during baseline and intervention in student teaching conferences.

decrease in the number of implicit tasks remained consistently stable across the observation sessions in the intervention conditions. Also, variability decreased in the intervention conditions. The decrease in the number of implicit tasks for each university supervisor is consistent with the goals of the teacher education program which emphasized a decrease in the verbalization of implicit tasks that have little chance to remediate, modify or maintain student teacher or pupil behaviors.

Fully explicit tasks: Data for fully explicit tasks are shown in Figures 3 and 4. Figure 3 indicates that the mean number of fully explicit tasks for each university supervisor increased in the intervention conditions.

INSERT FIGURE 3 & 4

A visual inspection of Figure 4 shows an immediate increase in the number of fully explicit tasks for each university supervisor in the intervention conditions. Figure 4 also shows a very low and stable baseline condition across all subjects. Variability is evident in the intervention conditions for each university supervisor. The presence of variability in the intervention conditions is an indication that the focus of a conference cannot be held constant. Factors, such as the stage in the unit being taught (beginning or end of a unit),

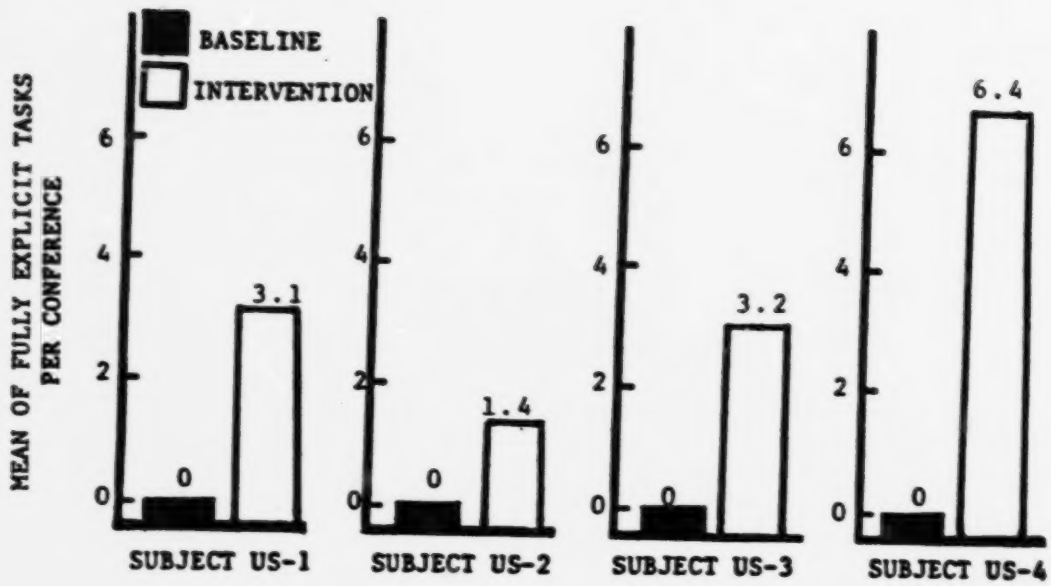

Figure 3: Frequencies of fully explicit tasks verbalized by university supervisors during conferences.

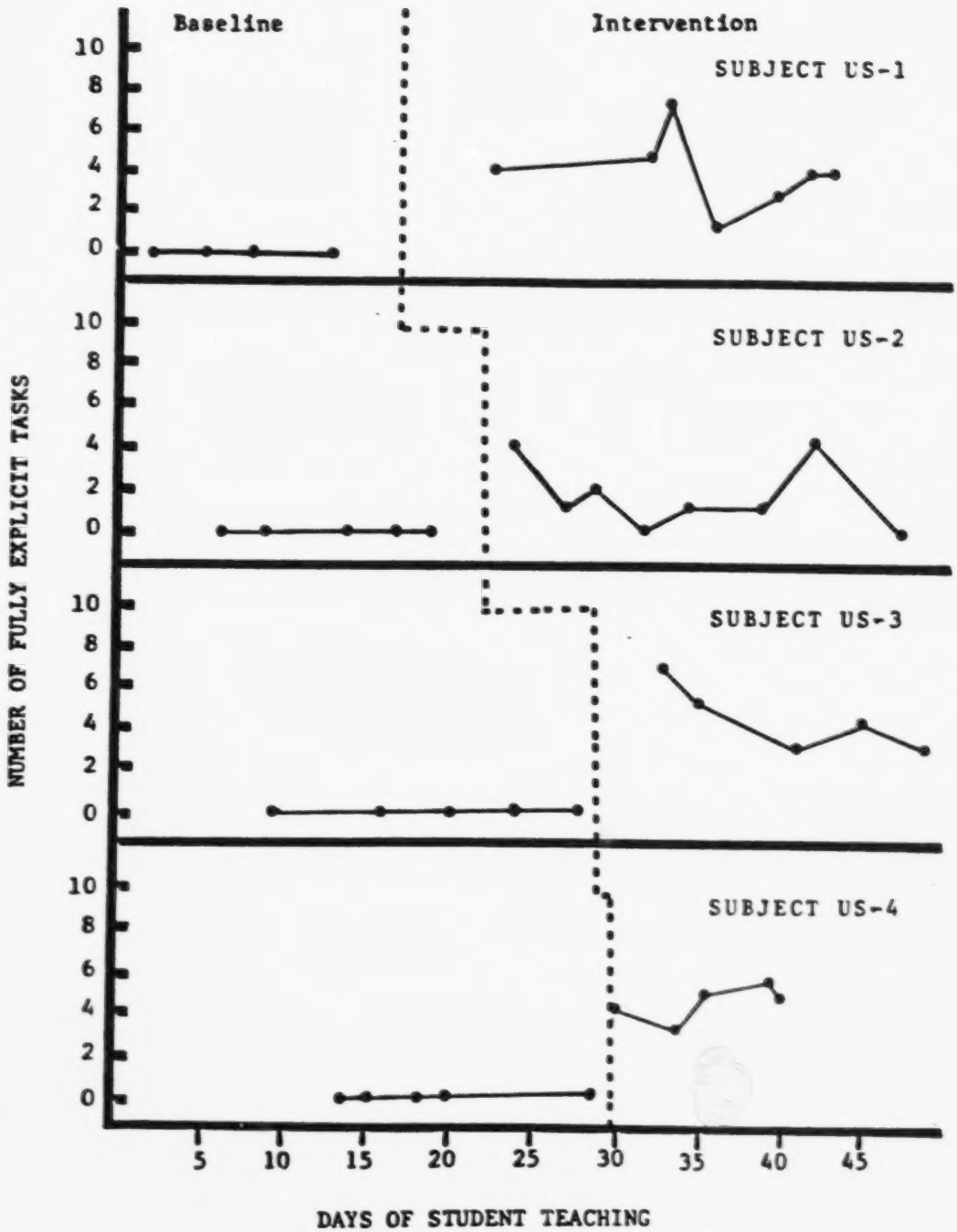

Figure 4: Frequency of fully explicit tasks verbalized by university supervisors (US.) during baseline and intervention in student teaching conferences.

performance attributions, and the teaching capabilities of the individual student can influence the number of fully explicit tasks in a conference session. The increase in the number of fully explicit tasks is consistent with the goals of the teacher education program which emphasized an increase in the frequency of fully explicit tasks that has greater potential to remediate, modify or maintain student teacher behavior.

Types of accountability

Type 1 accountability statements: Data for type 1 accountability statements are shown in Figures 5 and 6. Figure 5 indicates that the mean number of type 1 accountability statements for university supervisor 1 and university supervisor 4 decreased following the training program.

INSERT FIGURE 5 & 6

A visual inspection of Figure 6 shows an immediate decrease in the number of type one accountability statements for university supervisor 1 and university supervisor 4. Figure 6 also indicates a more stable trend for university supervisor 1 and university supervisor 4 following in the intervention conditions. As in the case of university supervisor 2 and university supervisor 3, type 1 accountability statements were kept at a low and stable level in both the baseline and intervention conditions.

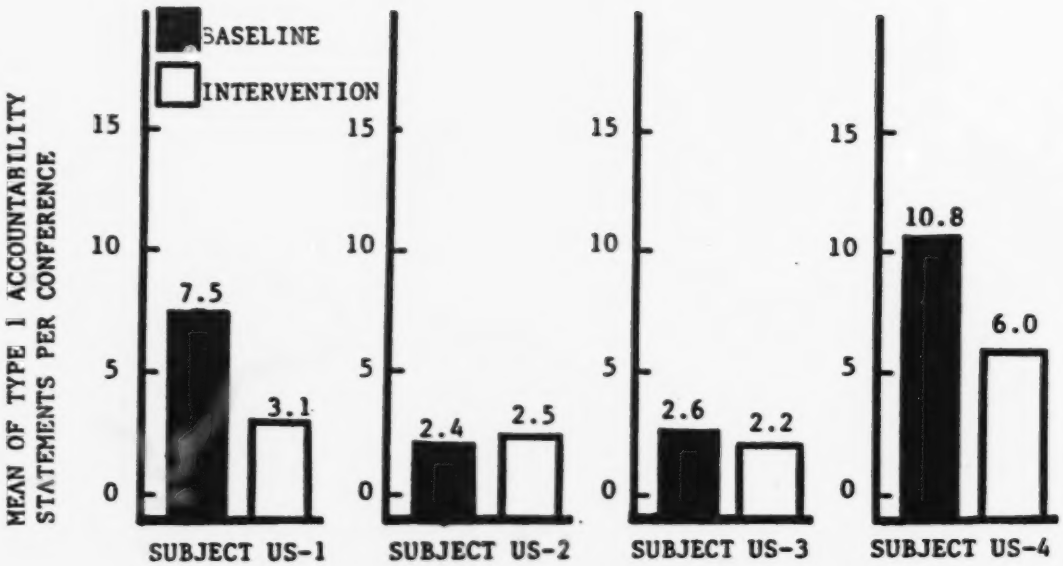

Figure 5: Frequencies of type 1 accountability statements verbalized by university supervisors during conferences.

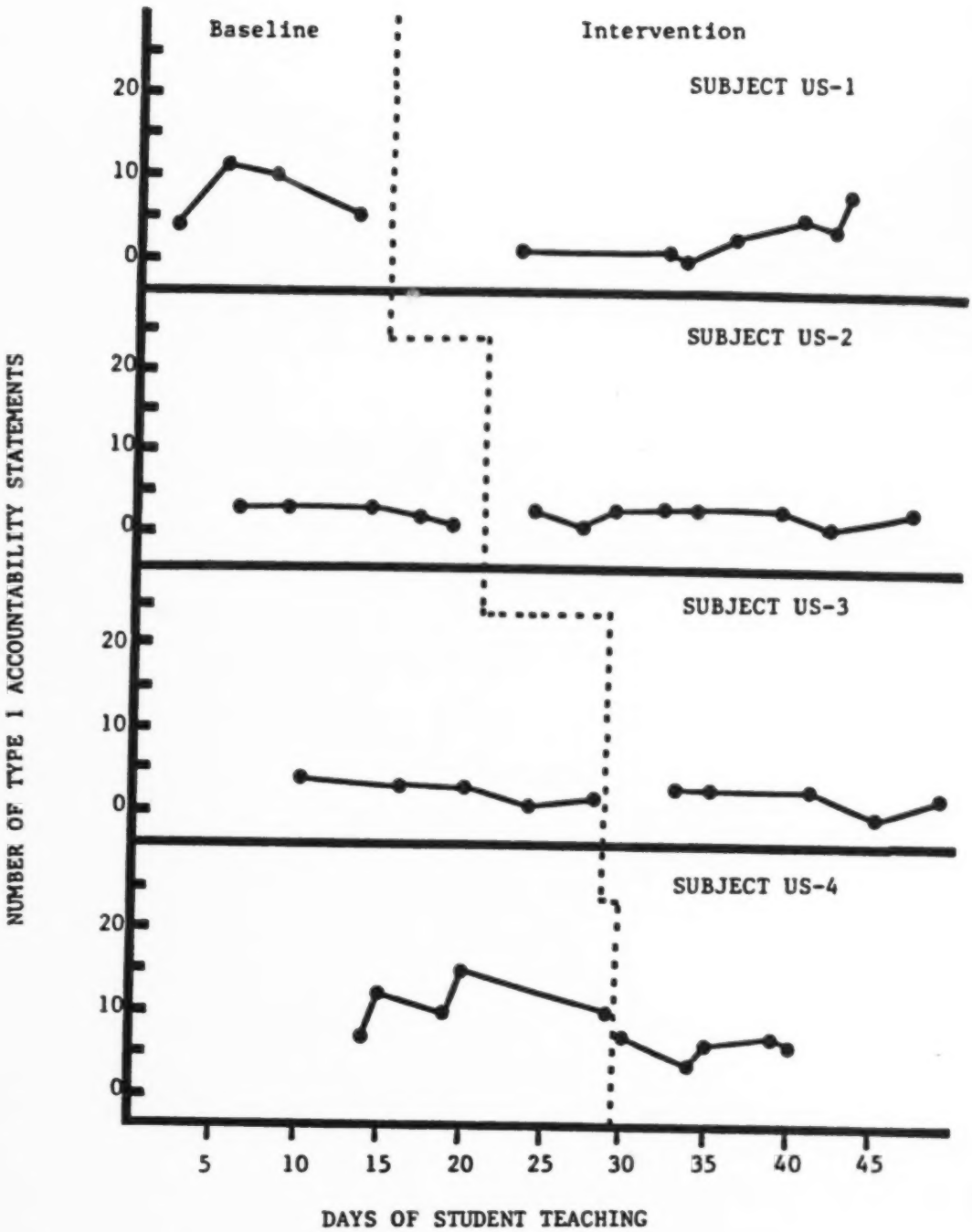

Figure .6: Frequency of type 1 accountability statements Verbalized by university supervisors (US.) during baseline intervention in student teaching conferences.

Type 3 accountability: Data for type 3 accountability statements are shown in Figures 7 and 8. Figure 7 shows that the mean number of type 3 accountability statements for each university supervisor increased in the intervention conditions.

INSERT FIGURE 7 & 8

A visual inspection of Figure 8 shows an immediate increase in the number of type 3 accountability statements for university supervisor 2, university supervisor 3 and university supervisor 4 in the intervention conditions. Also, Figure 8 shows a very low and stable baseline condition for each university supervisor. In addition, there is evidence of variability in the intervention conditions for each university supervisor. The evidence of variability in the intervention conditions explains that, the focus a conference cannot be kept constant, in terms of specific numbers of accountability statements. The number of type 3 accountability statements emited, may depend upon the number of pre-specified tasks that are fully explicit.

General Discussion

The training program utilized in this study is compatible with the goals of the teacher education program. The results of this study are also, consistent with the goals of the training program which emphasized the specification of tasks in fully

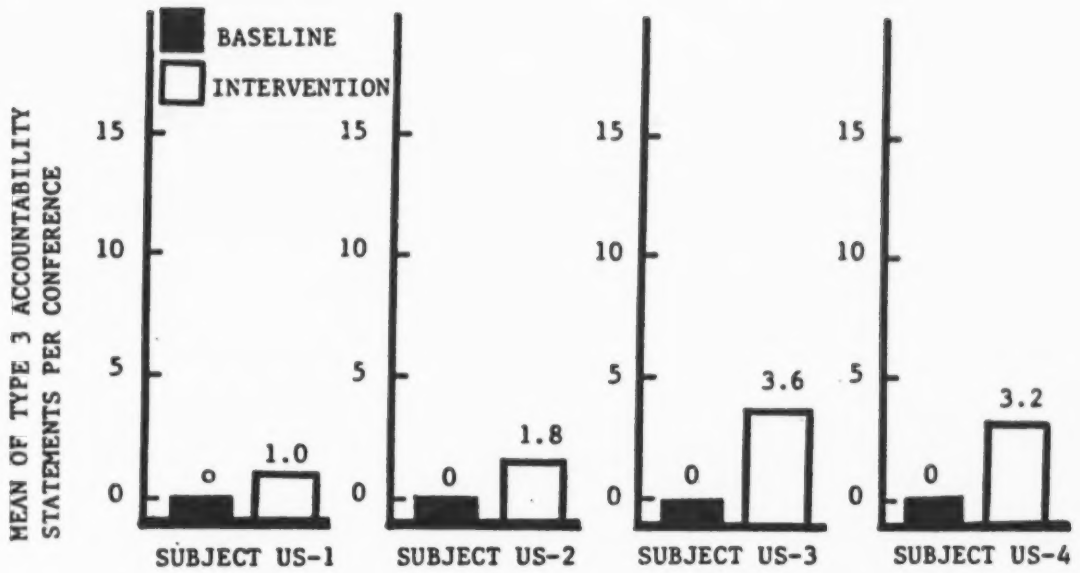

Figure 7: Frequencies of type 3 accountability statements verbalized by university supervisors during conferences.

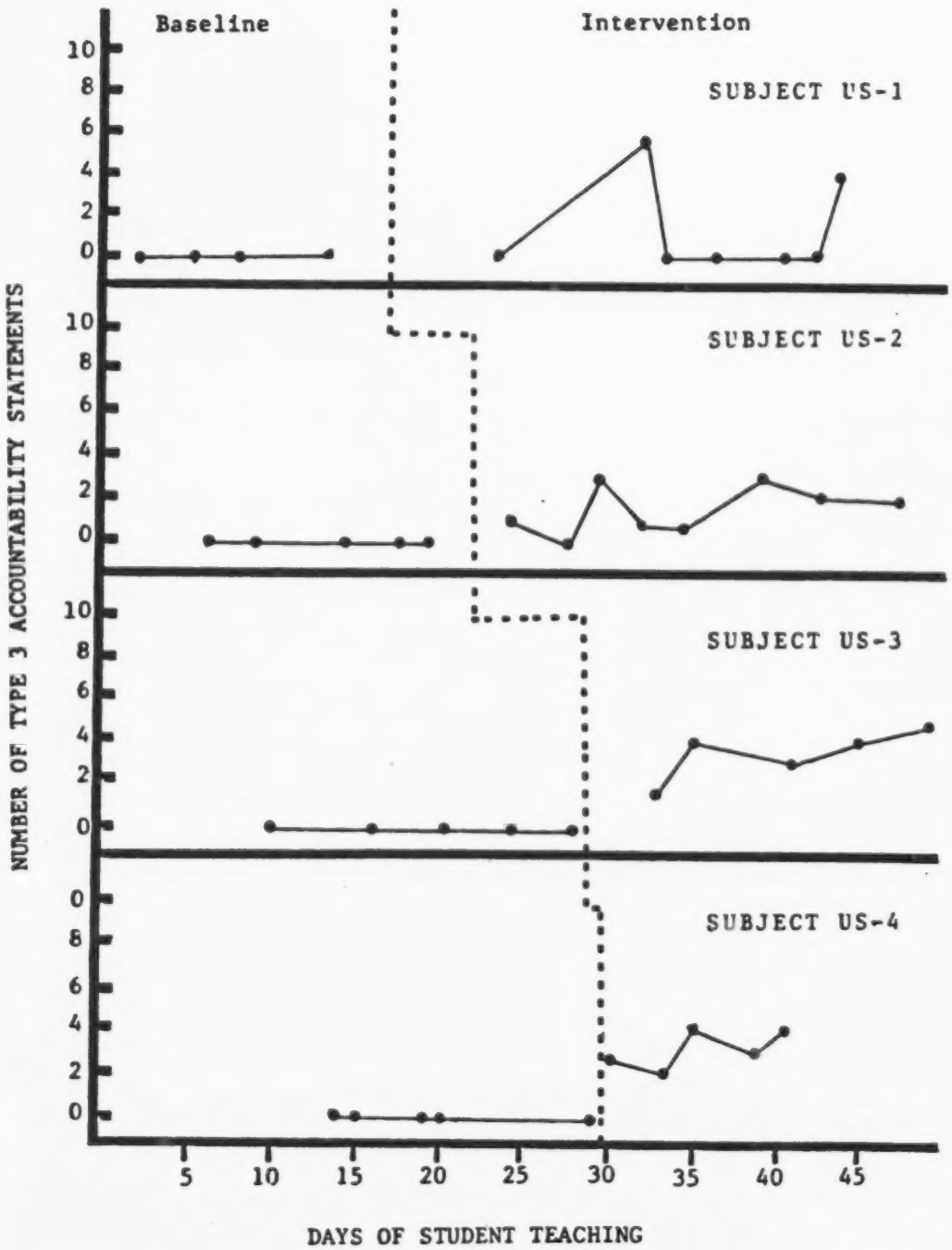

Figure 8: Frequency of type 3 accountability statements verbalized by university supervisors (US.) during baseline and intervention in student teaching conferences.

explicit manner and holding student teachers accountable for their performances during student teaching.

The training program was self-instructional. This approach differed from the traditional inservice or university courses which have in the past attempted similar tasks. The self-instructional nature of the training program provided opportunities for university supervisors to work at their own pace and in a systematic manner. Thus, university supervisors were able to gradually develop specific skills that would approximate the terminal goal of becoming proficient in communicating tasks in fully explicit manner, and holding students accountable for their performances.

The instructional package included a precise definition of what is to be learned, active participation to facilitate the achievement of the terminal objective and immediate feedback. The entire training program can be completed in eight hours or less with great satisfaction. The four university supervisors in this study indicated great satisfaction with the training process in an attitude questionnaire administered at the end of the training process. The training program is pedagogically efficient and very effective as indicated by the trends in the results.

Training university supervisors appear to make a lot of sense, if students are to receive explicit informations about their performances in student teaching. As Hawkins et al., (1985) indicated, students often receive feedback that is vague and implicit, and as such they are unable to follow through successfully during subsequent teaching. The results of this study has clearly indicated that, university supervisors can improve the explicitness of their communications with student teachers as a result of the training in a specific program.

This study was a step in a series of planned investigations which could strengthen the case for careful training of supervisors of student teachers in programs that are compatible with the teacher education program goals. It is the investigator's hope that teacher education programs based on research on effective teaching will continue their work in developing the scientific basis of the art of teaching.

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